

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 696

CS 509 446

AUTHOR Hugenberg, Lawrence W.; Moyer, Barbara S.
TITLE Groups in Organizations and Communication Training:
Closing the Barn Door.
PUB DATE Nov 96
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Speech Communication Association (82nd, San Diego,
CA, November 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information
Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; *Communication Skills;
*Conflict Resolution; *Group Dynamics; Higher
Education; *Interpersonal Communication; Literature
Reviews; Organizations (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS Communication Competencies

ABSTRACT

Noting that research is inconclusive regarding the role of mediation in groups, this paper represents an initial attempt to integrate specific communication skills into the teaching of mediation. The paper begins with a literature review investigating literature on communication competence during conflict to establish a foundation for the basic leadership communication requirements. Sections of the literature review part of the paper address group members' perceptions and behaviors, negotiation, the role of the mediator, communication competence, mediation in groups, group communication and mediation training, and mediation skills in organizational groups. The paper next discusses and defines the characteristics of dialogic mediation (a non-traditional approach to training group members in mediation skills): authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, presentness, spirit of mutual equality, and supportive psychological climate. The paper concludes that training in dialogic communication is likely to improve how conflict is handled in groups for two reasons: members are sensitized through training to mediation efforts and will be more likely to accept those efforts; and each group member will be able to use mediation skills to resolve conflicts in the group as needed. Contains 65 references. (RS)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 404 696

Mediation Training in Groups 1

Running Head: Mediation Training in Groups

Groups in Organizations and Communication Training: Closing the Barn Door

Lawrence W. Hugenberg, *Youngstown State University*
and
Barbara S. Moyer, *Kent State University*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Hugenberg

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper presented during the Speech Communication Association
Convention, San Diego, CA, November 1996.

CS 509 446

Groups in Organizations and Communication Training:

Closing the Barn Door

Throughout the life of organizational groups, from initial interactions to the final meeting, conflicts arise. Often these conflicts are the result of differing views group members hold on organizational issues that the group is committed to resolve. During the problem-solving activities, alliances form around these different views. The group leader is typically in the unenviable position of attempting to bring order out of chaos, especially when the sides are diametrically opposed, when individuals are highly ego-involved in their disparate positions, or when parties forward a very irrational stance. The task of bringing order to group activities is not the sole responsibility of the group leader. Each group member should assume a share in the responsibility of mediating the organizational group back on task, although group members are not an unbiased third party. The goal of this manuscript is to uncover a natural connection between leadership in organizational groups and mediation skills that can be effectively used to resolve conflict, enhance group satisfaction, and build quality interpersonal relationships. With this in mind, the following literature review examines definitions, models and studies of mediation and negotiation.

The overriding problem to facilitate and enhance organizational group performance might be traced to the individual member's lack of competent mediation skills. It is

unacceptable and impractical to expect a leader to mediate all conflict in a group. For one thing, the leader may become as ego-involved in a conflict as any other group member. In such instances, having other group members trained in mediation will help resolve conflicts in mutually beneficial ways.

Review of Literature

This review investigates literature on communication competence during conflict to establish a foundation for the basic leadership communication requirements. Specific techniques and strategies of negotiation and mediations are explicated.

In an effort to study these issues, the nature of conflict, negotiation, and mediation will be discussed. Also, studies using the various suggested strategies and techniques for reaching mutual agreement are investigated to find those most effective and appropriate. Leaders, and as a result groups, who avail themselves of the information on effective negotiation techniques will, perhaps, be more prepared to facilitate effective outcomes of group conflict. Pondy (1967) recognized the importance of effective management of conflict, stating "A conflict episode can be thought of as a gradual escalation to a state of disorder. If choice is the climax of a decision, then by analogy, open war or aggression is the climax of a conflict episode" (p. 299). Pondy (1967) went on to discuss the positive nature of the

"conflict aftermath" if the episode is resolved in mutually satisfactory ways. He referred to this phenomena as "the basis for a more cooperative relationship" that may motivate participants to confront other issues of potential conflict with the assurance that the conflict will be competently managed (p. 305). Conflict is not necessarily to be avoided, therefore, but can be used to create a more positive group atmosphere. Whether conflict serves as "functional" or "dysfunction" can be determined by evaluating its effect on "productivity, stability, or adaptability" (Pondy, p. 305).

Three categories of conflict communication are (1) avoidance, (2) distributive, and (3) integrative. Walton and McKersie (1965) defined these as follows: (1) avoidance tactics are communication acts that reflect denial of the existence of conflict, (2) distributive tactics are competitive and participants' view successful outcome as a big win, and (3) integrative tactics are more cooperative. The use of distributive tactics during conflict is conducive to stalemates, especially when group members are unwilling to change the position of the bottom line. Integrative tactics are used by parties who seek mutually beneficial outcomes. All group members should be able to competently demonstrate these integrative tactics to facilitate mutually beneficial resolution of conflict.

On the basis of these assertions, Watkins (1974) forwarded a model of conflict. His model was a composite of the available information on conflict communication and included the following

six axioms:

1. Conflict requires at least two parties capable of invoking sanctions on each other.
2. Conflicts arise due to the existence of a mutually desired but mutually unobtainable objective.
3. Each party in conflict has four possible types of action alternatives:
 - a. to obtain the mutually desired objective,
 - b. to end the conflict,
 - c. to invoke sanctions against the opponent,
 - d. to communicate something to the opponent.
4. Parties in conflict may have different value or perceptual systems.
5. Each party has resources which may be increased or diminished by implementation of action alternatives.
6. Conflict terminates only when each party is satisfied that it has 'won' or 'lost' or believes that the probable costs of continuing the conflict outweigh the probable costs of ending the conflict. (pp. 1-2)

Tidwell (1994) stated, "Those who experience conflict are hungry consumers, looking for more information on how to end the conflict while winning as much as possible" (p. 8). Training all organizational group members in mediation skills will increase the likelihood that conflicts are resolved so each member involved feels they "won" something.

Group Members' Perceptions and Behaviors

Generally, group members seek potential rewards that outweigh potential costs (Thilbaut & Kelley, 1959). Predicting costs and rewards can determine the selection of the negotiation strategies. The exchange of information during the episode permits the participants to formulate predictions, and this knowledge guides their communicative behavior. Deutsch (1960) concluded from his experiment using the prisoners' dilemma game that positive outcomes are linked to availability of information. According to Putnam and Jones (1982a), information exchange during negotiation can be divided into the following major areas: "(1) access to payoff information, (2) the amount of information exchanged, and (3) the disclosure of honest or accurate information" (p. 267).

Power and control issues are associated with the exchange of information. Schelling (1960) successfully argued that if a party perceived that her or his opponent was not well informed on the issues, this perception strengthened the informed parties position but was followed by altruistic behavior. Putnam and Jones (1982a) found that the informed party often took unfair advantage of the uninformed party especially when the informed parties were bargaining from a distributive position. Information exchange does not always contribute to cooperative bargaining behavior, however, especially during distributive episodes, and can aggravate the conflict (Druckman & Zechmeister, 1973). Often,

the perception and interpretation of information determines the negotiators selection of negotiation behavior.

If members interpret their opponents' behavior as threatening, according to Deutsch and Krauss (1960), there is less chance that the episode will be conducted cooperatively. "High verbal threat behavior" was defined by Marr (1974) as communication that "reflects the unwillingness of the source to consider other alternatives and which includes words of antagonism toward other individuals or toward their ideas" (p. 7).

Threatening behavior, usually, does not contribute to a mutually satisfactory resolution of group (Bales, 1970; Deutsch & Krauss, 1960; Leathers, 1969; McCroskey & Wright, 1971; Scheidel & Crowell, 1966). Scholars who focused on the phasic nature of group communication indicated that threatening behavior "pulsates in frequency" throughout the episode (Marr, 1974, Scheidel & Crowell, 1966). It may disappear and reappear according the parties perception of their opponents' feedback. Threat was shown to inspire more threat, and low threat was also reciprocated (Manusov, et al., 1994). Manusov et al. (1994) interpreted Schonbach's theory of conflict escalation as:

A severe reproach that threatens another's sense of control or esteem [and] tends to escalate conflict. This potential negative spiral moves disputants away from discussing underlying issues associated with

relational problems and distracts them from looking ahead toward options of or managing problems. (p. 2)

Group members, aware of this negative possibility can, if prepared, diffuse verbal threats and guide fellow members toward satisfactory resolution.

Sabourin (1995) found that during episodes of crisis conflict, marital groups' competitive behavior was characterized by "one up" moves or equal amounts of "domineeringness" that diminished the power to negotiate cooperatively by reducing the likelihood of empathy for their opponents' positions (p. 278). Escalating symmetry was explained as attempts to control by one group member that are met with controlling behaviors from other group members (Sabourin, 1995, p. 273). In an earlier study, Gottman (1979) observed this phenomena and described it as rigidly structured asymmetrical reciprocity. Putnam and Jones (1982a) found that confrontation during negotiation "frequently leads to round-robin, attack-defend arguments" that could "escalate into a lose-lose situation ... when an attack-defend pattern evolves into sequences of attack-attack or defend-defend" (p. 191). The goal of this type of bargaining is to use coercive verbal behavior to force the opponent to comply.

Negotiation

Putnam and Jones (1982a) identified two strategy categories of negotiation: threat and promise. Promising tactics were identified as those that communicated expectations for future

behavior based on rewards. Threat tactics are generally associated with anti-social or negative persuasion. Negative strategies, although potentially non-productive, have been shown to lead to compliance when threat was perceived as serious (Bonoma & Tedeschi, 1974) or appropriate and legitimate (Brown, 1968). When parties are faced with aggressive affronts, behavior is based on their decision to either reciprocate and chance the "spiral" effect or comply and possibly appear weak.

Promises were also reciprocated and often led to cooperative negotiation (Krauss & Deutsch, 1966). Negotiation researchers have investigated the timing and size of concessions (promises) during the process to determine the conditions conducive for tactical reciprocity. Siegel and Fouraker (1960) and Osgood (1959) forwarded seemingly opposing theories of bargaining. The "levels of aspiration" theory states that the party with high aspirations will be countered by high aspirations (Seigel & Fouraker, 1960). That is, if one party's expectations involve a big gain, then the opposing party will also expect big gains. The graduated reciprocation in tension reduction theory (GRIT) states that concessions will be reciprocated with concessions, and concessions will become increasingly larger in subsequent negotiation events (Osgood, 1959). Both theories have been supported. Komorita & Barnes (1969) suggested that conditions of negotiation influenced the process. Pressures or the importance of the outcome for both sides to reach agreement produced many mutual concessions and trial agreements. In organizational groups

each member can gain, potentially, in her or his status through the success of the group. Similarly, each member has something to lose, potentially, if the group is unsuccessful in attaining its goals as prescribed by or described to the organization.

Seemingly, then, one might speculate that organizational groups would proceed towards goal attainment with minimal conflict.

Research in group behaviors and our own experiences in groups in our organizations suggest that conflicts abound and impact the group.

Hamner (1974) tested Siegel and Fouraker's and Osgood's theories. He concluded that the tougher the position, the more trials it will take to reach agreement, the longer it will take, the greater the overall cost to the negotiators and the greater the chance that the sessions will end without agreement. He also found that the tough bargainer had a higher payoff potential and a greater risk of losing everything by ending the negotiations. Strategies that were mutually rewarding showed the greatest profit for both sides in the end. However, Turner (1990) found that organizational teams lowered their levels of aspirations after hearing the other team's arguments even if their goals were incongruent. The structure of the process, although an important variable, shares importance with the content of the negotiation communication. Having all group members competent in mediation skills would likely reduce the incongruities in their views of the group goals as well as their individual goals for working in the group.

The Mediator

The role of the mediator, during negotiation sessions, is to control the process and contribute positively to the substantive dimension. Wall (1981) proposed a model of mediation that includes:

- (1) Setting up the negotiation and identifying the party representatives,
- (2) Enticing reluctant parties through downplaying potential costs and playing up potential rewards or by suggesting high costs of refusals,
- (3) Establishing protocol via clarifying issues, procedures and principles,
- (4) Initiates the opening agreements to encourage bargaining behavior, and
- (5) Control negotiation by enforcing the established protocol. (pp. 160-167)

The mediator controls the communication by clarifying information, presenting it in a positive fashion, or asking parties to role-play the opponent's position. Donohue, Allen and Burrell (1988) observed that the competent mediator acts as the negotiation "interventionist" and employs three basic strategies to control the process and content: "structuring," "reframing," and "expanding" (pp. 107-110). Donohue (1981b) concluded that "structuring" or controlling the parties' interactions while enforcing negotiation principles was the most influential of mediator competencies in reaching agreement.

Mediation Training in Groups 12

The mediator serves various functions during the event. Wall (1981) pointed out that the mediator can, among other behaviors, negotiate with each representative individually to gain information not shared during the session or to privately appeal for concessions. Also, by taking the responsibility for firm proposals, the mediator can save the representative's face and credibility, and he or she can communicate a constituent deadline to move representatives from their variant positions.

The necessity of mediator intervention is evident when negotiation between conflicting sides of the group behave emotionally or irrationally. Creators of conflict models assume the rationality of the interactants. Conflict often occurs between group members whose ego-involvement renders them incapable of reaching agreement without the neutral intervention of a trained mediator. Tidwell (1994) observed that "people often do not have certain enduring aims as such but rather discover their aims moments before taking action" (p. 5). Rationality was defined as consistency and achievement of predetermined goals. Negotiators, for reasons unknown, behave inconsistently. This makes the accomplishment of aims or goals doubly difficult. Group members in conflict also possess value systems based on their own unique perceptions which often are not shared by other parties with differing perceptions and value systems. Tidwell (1994) argued that the mediator must "somehow lead people to a situation where they can, at the very least, allow two contending perceptions to coexist" (p. 5).

Group members often have differing individual goals and different views of the goals of the group. The competent mediator must learn to utilize all of Aristotle's "means of persuasion" to reach consensus. The problem of group members expecting the mediator to manage conflict is reduced if each group member is trained in mediation skills and is competent in using these skills during group meetings. One person, no matter how competent a mediator they happen to be, is simply insufficient to resolve conflict in organizational groups. With each group member possessing mediation skills, conflicts, regardless of which members (including the leader) are involved, are likely to be resolved in a more positive, mutually-beneficial manner. It is less likely that all group members will be intensely ego-involved in a conflict situation that they are impotent to exercise their mediation skills to mediate the conflict.

Communication Competence

The skills approach to communication competence, according to Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), involves communication that is effective, appropriate and flexible. The effectiveness and appropriateness of mediator communication, according to Canary and Spitzberg (1987), are dimensions that should, but do not always, exist during conflict management. The mediator's communication may be effective but not appropriate. That is, he or she may guide the disputants to consensus using coercive and mutually unsatisfactory methods. The mediator's communication may

be appropriate, if it does not break with group rules and established norms, yet ineffective in helping opposing sides reach agreement. The authors found in their study on perceptions of mediator competence that "integrative tactics were perceived as the most generally and specifically appropriate ... [and] were seen as most effective across episodes" (p. 110). Integrative tactics are those that endeavor to find areas of mutuality upon which the parties may agree, thereby achieving, to some degree, collaboration.

Barge and Hirokawa (1989), forwarded a model of competency for group leadership. The emphasis on leadership is appropriate, especially when examining the importance of mediation skills in organizational groups. It is problematic to assume that one group member, a leader, can possess all and exercise appropriate mediation skills in all conflict situations. Changing the focus from the leader-as-mediator theory to a group member-as-mediator perspective is important to the success of the group as well as member satisfaction. Barge and Hirokawa (1989) outlined their fundamental tenets of the model as follows:

- (a) Leadership involves action that assists a group in overcoming existing barriers to goal achievement,
- (b) the exercise of leadership occurs through the process of interaction and communication, and
- (c) communication skills (or competencies) represent the principal means by which individuals exercise leadership in groups. (p. 171)

The authors argued for "leadership as mediation" and define mediator communication competence as leadership that "begins with the assumption that adaptation and adjustment lie at the heart of the leadership process" (p. 171). As the "medium," the leader must evaluate the problems blocking the group from reaching its goals and describe the problem and the possible solutions to the group. The skills the authors suggested as the "basis for leadership" include:

She or he must possess various encoding and decoding skills that enable her or him to produce and sequence communicative symbols and messages so as to facilitate the group's ability to understand and deal with existing barriers and problems appropriately. (p. 172)

Mediation in Groups

Competition for opposing goals, however, is not often conducive to collaboration, and, again, may require more power of persuasion than anything else. Tidwell (1994) observed, "Implicit in the repertoire of the mediator are the skills of persuasion, manipulation, audience analysis, and influence" (p. 6).

Motivating group members, rational or irrational, to reach agreement on points of contention during conflict might be similar to "persuading Fundamentalist Christian anti-abortion advocates to change their position by using scientific data" (Tidwell, p. 7).

The obvious difficulty of mediating group conflict, may mean that there are numerous group leaders who do not have the first notion when to intervene during a crisis or an impasse. Often, we suspect, leaders permit the sides to indulge in nonproductive communication that spirals toward a condition of disrepair. Aggressive and uncooperative negotiation behavior is often the hallmark of the distributive "crisis bargaining event" where disputants stray from the substantive issues and attack on the basis of personal and emotional issues (Manusov, et al., 1994; Sabourin, 1995). The competent mediator knows when to intervene, and when to permit sides to vent. The timing of intervention (Donohue, Allen, & Burrell, 1988) was proven significant to the achievement of agreement. Knowing when to remind group members of the rules of protocol, when to suggest proposals, when to ask for more information, for instance, were shown to be important skills. A delicate factor of the process appeared to be the mediator's ability, via perfect timing, to make participants in the conflict believe consensus was, primarily, due to their own ideas and contributions. In this way, the group members gain confidence that they can resolve conflicts in the future without overt intervention.

An important consideration is whether or not the group will accept a strong mediator stance during periods of conflict. Schultz (1982) found that groups want a strong assertive leader when decisions need to be made. The more pressure the groups perceive, the more they opt for the "argumentative" leader.

Groups with more than one potential "leader" in mediation may, therefore, look to someone who is not ordinarily considered the leader to guide them through a crisis. The leadership skills required of an effective mediator, perhaps, will be recognized and appreciated as needed -- regardless of which group member uses them. This is the pivotal issue for this essay: *the training of all group members to exert leadership in mediating conflict as deemed appropriate*. Schultz (1982) suggested because groups "tend to avoid conflict and to accept a compromise solution," the leader that is able to guide the group toward this end possesses "an essential skill, given that change is so often perceived as discomfoting, haphazard or irritation" (p. 374).

Bartunek, Benton and Keys (1975) found that bargaining groups that perceived pressure to make quality decisions required more overt interaction on the "content" level with a leader. The authors' study revealed group preference for direct intervention when accountability was high. That is, when members perceived the decision to be of importance to their constituents, then the group desired more help from the leader to resolve conflict and reach agreement. During the study, groups relied heavily on the leader for information and proposal suggestions. Process oriented intervention may be equally beneficial for the small group that has time to develop, with the help of training in mediation skills. Content orientation was associated with information deficiencies that needed immediate attention. Process orientation

was associated with more socio-emotional needs and may be effective when conflict becomes overly emotional.

Grebe (1994) developed a "problem-solving schema for mediation" based on Coogler's (1978) model of structured

Grebe's Problem-Solving Schema for Mediation

Step 1: Define the Issue to be Discussed

Step 2: Gather the Information

(Facts, Concerns, etc.)

Step 3: Generate the Options

(Based on Steps 1 & 2)

Step 4: Choose a Solution

(That fits Steps 1 & 2)

(Grebe, 1994, p. 18)

mediation that was originally forwarded as an aid to mediated divorce settlements. He observed that "Most people want to act responsibly and be treated with respect, ... and even in this crisis situation and in the midst of emotional turmoil people can be taught to make rational decisions" (Grebe, 1994, p. 16).

Perhaps, these conclusions suggest a summary of our current understanding of the group in conflict and the function of the mediator. One conclusion of this literature review is that groups

in the midst of conflict probably want a hasty yet satisfactory end to the crisis (Bartunek, et al., 1975; Schultz, 1982). Group members want to behave competently and want to be guided in their efforts by a competent mediator (Canary & Spitzberg, 1984). Conflicting sides reach more mutually satisfactory resolutions when they are guided by a skillful mediator who urges all sides to use integrative and cooperative tactics (Grebe, 1994). Irrational disputants are subject to effective persuasive strategies to guide their acceptance of other's world views (Tidwell, 1994). Socio-emotional issues can be addressed during conflict by the implementation of process oriented strategies (Donohue, 1988).

A second conclusion of this literature review is that without mediation, groups may suffer from the negative effects of conflict. The "aftermath" may leave members unsure that any area of potential disagreement will be resolved in a satisfactory fashion in the future (Pondy, 1967). Members may become disheartened and uncertain of their groups' ability to reach informed and consensual agreements. Fear of the affects of a "spiral of negative reciprocity" may cause members to remain silent on controversial issues, and this may render them ineffective group members (Gottman, 1979). Parties that are permitted, by an untrained leader (or by their peers), to dominate the group with their inappropriate or threatening behavior during conflict may reduce overall group satisfaction while blocking worthwhile contributions (Putnam & Jones, 1982b).

Group leaders who want to be competent facilitators of conflict management may do well to develop mediation skills (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987).

Suggestions for conflict management are usually general guidelines and not specific actions to be taken at specific junctions in the group process. This is a problem with research conducted on mediation. Specific mediation skills must be identified, as well as their appropriateness during group meetings. Wall (1981), however, offered the most comprehensive set of suggestions. His list should be used as a guide and not gospel because groups have their own unique characteristics. Also, ethical issues may surround some of his recommended tactics, yet it is the decision of each leader to determine when seemingly coercive communicative behavior is appropriate and necessary. Later in this paper, we attempt to develop some specific mediation skills that can be taught to members of a group before they begin working together and will facilitate the group's efforts.

Before any strategy and its selected tactic can be of use, the mediator must find a way to elicit a commitment from conflicting group members. Displays of commitment serve to make negotiation strategies used by the participants more effective. Walton and McKersie (1965) stated that commitment to the task can be communicated in various ways including verbal indication of flexibility. Flexibility, as we had discovered, is one of the essential skills of the competent communicator (Canary &

Spitzberg, 1984; Barge & Hirokawa, 1989). The first step toward mediating an agreement between conflicting group members may be the most difficult -- encouraging disputants to agree to be open-minded and flexible.

Essentially, the literature on conflict, negotiation, mediation and group leadership is vast, yet inconclusive. The investigation of relevant studies and seminal works leads us to conclude the following:

Groups, whose members learn to use competent mediation skills during episodes of conflict resolution, facilitate outcomes that are mutually acceptable for all group members and enhance group satisfaction.

The literature is replete with suggestions, on the macro and micro levels, for members to adopt efforts to become competent mediators. The choice of specific strategies must be flexible and appropriate to the group culture and personality variables. Over time, the member will be able to assess each individual's characteristics during conflict episodes and can, therefore, plan actions and interventions custom-designed to the constitution of the group and individual group members. That is, there is probably no one set of strategies that accomplishes mutually satisfactory outcomes that suits all groups. Polzner, Mannix, and Neale (1995) suggested this in concluding, "Patterns of behavior among the parties in a multiparty negotiation may vary drastically, depending on the group with which each party identifies" (p. 132). Yet, the models and taxonomies offer a

valuable bank of possible tactics from which the motivated group member-as-mediator can select, try, re-select and try again. A mediator's competence is judged, in part, by her or his abilities to determine appropriate mediation or negotiation strategies to address specific conflict situations. The final part of this essay proposes some specific mediation skills for training organizational group members.

Competent conflict management, as previously stated, is important across several dimensions. Not only is satisfaction with the outcomes an important issue, but maintenance of the members' attitude toward the group and the group process is vital. Reiches and Harral (1974) articulated their position on the negotiation process in a way that sums up the greater purpose of this review and the research that will result,: "Bargaining may have ramifications reaching beyond the explicit terms . . . of the settlement" (p. 37). The group member, trained in conflict resolution, may serve as a prototype of mediator competence. Her or his communication skills may set a standard for members to emulate long after the group has dissolved.

Group Training in Mediation Skills

The planning of and training in mediation skills for group members before they begin task functions is, in our opinion, an

appropriate function for organizational groups. Roloff and Jordan (1992) concluded:

Few researchers have studied the most obvious and important aspect of preparation, the content of the negotiation plans. Researchers rarely ask negotiators to describe their plans, choosing instead to correlate facets of the planning process with outcomes. By not assessing plan content, researchers are unable to identify features that hinder goal accomplishment. (p. 21)

Boyer and Pond (1987), although written earlier than Roloff and Jordan, also point out the importance of planning for organizational groups:

After initial problem identification activities, they [group members] should be encouraged to set aggressive short-term and long-term objectives and secure management's agreement and support early. This is best done by taking each group through the goal-setting process where they clarify their mission, set objectives, and establish concrete goals and action plans to support each objective. (p. 781)

The missing element in all this planning is initiating the communication skill training needed by group members to facilitate the accomplishment of the organizational group's goals. One of the most important elements of communication training for organizational groups is training in mediation

skills.

Group Communication & Mediation Training

Researchers have examined how to make organizational groups function more effectively, make better decisions, and solve problems more efficiently (Amason, 1996; Baurdoux, 1994; Bell, 1974; Eiseman, 1977; Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995; Pitt, Tynan, & Nel, 1994; Priem, Harrison, & Muir, 1995; Tan, Teo, & Wei, 1995). Other scholars have examined the processes of negotiation and mediation as they relate to conflict resolution in organizational group settings (Andrews, 1995; Brockman, 1996; Donohue, 1978; Donohue, 1981a; Donohue, et al., 1984; Fisher, 1972; Johnson, 1974; Pavitt, 1993; Podell & Knapp, 1969; Pruitt, 1971; Weingart, Bennett, & Brett, 1993). No research has been found, however, that specifically addresses the issue of training all group members in mediation skills, much less suggesting that these skills be assessed from a communication competence perspective.

Mediation Skills in Organizational Groups

Bush and Folger (1994) summarized various definitions and descriptions of mediation as "mediation is generally understood (based on its previous use in the labor field) as an informal process in which a neutral third party with no power to impose a resolution helps the disputing parties try to reach a mutually acceptable settlement" (p. 2). This summary description

highlights the problems of using mediation in organizational groups and sets the stage for the importance of training each group member in mediation skills. Organizational groups cannot rely on a "neutral third party" for mediation; they must rely on the mediation resources of the members. If the group members do not possess these skills, attempts at mediation will likely be unsuccessful.

Since traditional approaches to mediation shed little assistance to the organizational group, taking a more non-traditional approach to training group members mediation skills seems appropriate. Bush and Folger (1994), in examining an alternative orientation to mediation, explain transformative leadership as the logical progression in the development of our understanding and performance of mediation, regardless of situation. They suggest, "Transformative mediators concentrate on empowering parties to define issues and decide settlement terms for themselves on helping parties to better understand one another's perspectives" (p. 12). Centered on individual's communication skills and their abilities to help everyone understand each other, Bush and Folger (1994) point to a communicative approach to mediation in groups.

Dialogic Mediation

The approach we support, "dialogic mediation," is grounded in the literature in psychology and communication. Johannesen (1983), based on the writings of Carl Rogers (1961) and Martin

Buber (1958 & 1965), developed an orientation to communication which he defined as "dialogic communication" (pp. 47-51). These characteristics are: (a) authenticity, (b) inclusion, (c) confirmation, (d) presentness, (e) spirit of mutual equality, and (f) supportive psychological climate. Let's briefly define each of these characteristics.

Authenticity - "One is direct, honest, and straightforward in communicating all information and feelings that are relevant and legitimate for the subject at hand" (Johannesen, p. 50).

Inclusion - "One attempts to 'see the other,' to 'express the other side,' to 'imagine the real,' the reality of the other's viewpoint" (Johannesen, p. 50).

Confirmation - "We express nonpossessive warmth for the other. The other person is valued for his or her worth and integrity as a human" (Johannesen, p. 50).

Presentness - "Participants in dialogue must give full concentration to bringing their total and authentic beings to the encounter. They must demonstrate willingness to become fully involved with each other by taking time, avoiding distraction, begin communicatively accessible, and risking attachment" (Johannesen, p. 51).

Spirit of Mutual Equality - "... participants themselves view each other as persons rather than as objects, as things to be exploited or manipulated for selfish

satisfaction. The exercise of power or superiority is avoided" (Johannesen, p. 51).

Supportive Psychological Climate - "One encourages the other to communicate. One allows free expression, seeks understanding, and avoids value judgments that stifle (Johannesen, p. 51).

Each of these characteristics can be developed into specific communication skills that can be taught to group members. These characteristics are consistent with those identified as important for a mediator in Bush and Folger's description of transformative mediation. We conclude that these six characteristics are a logical extension of transformative mediation. They fill in specific communication skills the transformative mediator can use in working in organizational groups.

If all members are taught these skills, the "leader" of the group no longer assumes responsibility for mediating conflict. These all-important responsibilities are shared by all group members. Perhaps even more importantly, however, as a result of this training group members are sensitized to mediation and its proper role in organizational groups. Research does suggest it is important for group members to establish ground rules for acceptable behavior and goals for the group. One of the purposes of this training is to place "dialogic mediation" in the forefront of acceptable and recognizable behaviors for all group members. Whether "dialogic mediation" techniques are advanced by the leader or any group member, all group members should

recognize its importance to goal attainment and group satisfaction. This awareness will increase the likelihood that the mediation techniques used will resolve conflict in the organizational group.

Training in Dialogic Mediation

Based on the current lack of specific communication skills associated with training others in mediation skills and the total disregard for teaching group members mediation skills, we believe a timely and appropriate response is to develop training in "dialogic mediation." Using the six characteristics of dialogic communication (Johannesen, 1983) appropriate communication skills can be taught to facilitate successful mediation in organizational groups. The following is a beginning at developing specific skills for dialogic communication that, in total, form a training program in "dialogic mediation." At times, the skills overlap and help meet the goals of two or more of the characteristics of dialogue.

Authenticity. Members must understand the importance of being open in their organizational group. Hidden agendas are not relevant to the group's work. Individual agendas can be integrated into the group's goals only if revealed. Specific skills to include are:

1. Paraphrasing what is heard is an important skill because it allows others to hear a member's understanding of communication, the goals of the group, tasks to be

performed, etc.

2. Questioning skills are needed. Members learn instead of jumping to conclusions there are other ways to seek understanding. Questioning allows other members to be honest in explaining or elaborating on ideas.
3. Tact, as a language skill, helps members learn differing strategies for expressing their ideas. Although being honest is the goal, there are ways of being honest that do not initiate defensiveness in others.

Inclusion. Seeking contributions from all members is the reason we work in organizational groups versus working in isolation. Soliciting input from others is the goal of this dialogic skill. Members do not know what others know or their understanding of the group unless they are invited to communicate during group meetings. The dialogic mediator seeks everyone's participation and communicates that to each member. Specific skills for this characteristic include:

1. Questioning others to seek their involvement, opinion, impressions, etc. is important. Getting apprehensive members to participate is a communication skill. Demanding their involvement will likely be unsuccessful.
2. Listening skills provide us opportunity to learn from others. Demonstrating, verbally and nonverbally, a willingness to listen to all other members is important if they are to believe their contributions are welcomed by the group.

2. Questioning skills are needed. Members learn instead of jumping to conclusions there are other ways to seek understanding. Questioning allows other members to be honest in explaining or elaborating on ideas to the group.
3. Tact, as a language skill, helps members learn differing strategies for expressing their ideas. Although being honest is the goal, there are ways of being honest that do not initiate defensiveness in others.

Inclusion. Seeking contributions from all members is the reason we work in organizational groups versus working in isolation. Soliciting input from others is the goal of this dialogic skill. Members do not know what others know or their understanding of the group unless they are invited to communicate during group meetings. The dialogic mediator seeks everyone's participation and communicates that to each member. Specific skills for this characteristic include:

1. Questioning others to seek their involvement, opinion, impressions, etc. is important. Getting apprehensive members to participate is a communication skill. Demanding their involvement will likely be unsuccessful.
2. Listening skills provide us opportunity to learn from others. Demonstrating, verbally and nonverbally, a willingness to listen to all other members is important if they are to believe their contributions are welcomed by the group.

3. Empathy skills and communicating them to others

demonstrates a belief that each group member's ideas are important.

Confirmation. Communicating concern for the other person and their right to have opinions and ideas is the foundation of this dialogic skill. Criticism and ridicule offer little to the group effort and affects, in practice, a member's unwillingness to communicate within the group. No one group member is an expert at everything; the person mediating a conflict must assure each group member that all ideas expressed are of equal value and importance to the group. Skills for this characteristic include:

1. Listening to others -- nonjudgmentally. Being willing to try to understand others' points of view is the issue. Although the tendency is to ensure individual ideas are accepted as "better" or "more important" than other group members, the dialogic mediator make sure all ideas are received by the group on an equal footing.
2. Criticizing another group member and her or his ideas are two separate communication events. Members need to learn to separate criticism, whether positive or negative, of the individual from their ideas. Criticizing the person lowers their worth in the eyes of the group. The dialogic mediator will never let one group member criticize or attack another group member.
3. Trust in each other is important for the group to succeed. Teaching members to communicate in ways that

others trust them and their intentions is important. Members need to believe that their ideas will not be used against them in another setting (i.e., with the boss, in another group, with their colleagues, etc.). If group members cannot communicate that they can be trusted or that they do not trust others in the group, the conflict within the group will escalate to a point to where it cannot be resolved. The dialogic mediator established a spirit of trust within the group by showing her or his trust for all other members.

Presentness. Members need to learn to be active participants and not be distracted during organizational group meetings. There are several skills to facilitate the accomplishment of this characteristic.

1. Listening is perhaps the greatest skills members can learn to facilitate others' understanding of their involvement in the meeting. Demonstrating paying attention through careful listening skills is paramount to illustrating presentness.
2. Reflective paraphrasing illustrates an attention to what was just said. Dialogic mediators must illustrate this skill to focus attention on paying attention and not being distracted during group meetings.
3. Critical thinking skills enable group members to demonstrate relationships between ideas during group meetings. Being able to think critically about the

group's task and individual member's contributions to the task helps facilitate group and member satisfaction. The dialogic mediator helps this process by asking for interpretive statements from group members during the meetings.

4. Self-disclosure skills facilitate trust (mentioned above) within the group. In addition, the ready reception of others' disclosures in a trusting group environment illustrates that everyone is paying attention. Appropriate self-disclosure opens the communication because it demonstrates a trust for others and a willingness to be an active participant in the group.

Spirit of Mutual Equality. Getting their own way, imposing their agenda on the group, imposing their will on the group, minimizing the contributions of others, and forcing their agreement on the group have no room in dialogic mediation. Each group member must feel as if they are as important to the group as any other member. Eliminating is a difficult, but essential, part of successful groups and effective mediation of conflicts in groups.

1. Unconditional positive regard is central to creating a sense of equality in groups. Everyone offers something unique to the group and each group member must recognize the positive contributions of other members. Reducing the influence of bias on the communication is part of this training. Treating other group members as important

contributors, just as each group member wants his or her ideas to be treated is the goal.

2. Offering positive comments makes the contributor that everyone heard the idea, but may disagree with all or part of it. The skill of offering positive criticism is the goal of this dialogic skill.
3. Compromising ideas for the good of the organizational group allows for decisions to be reached for the good of the group instead of for the good of the individual member. Teaching the skills encompassing compromise is central to group performance and individual member satisfaction.

Supportive Psychological Climate. Building supportive climates in groups is the goal. Each member needs to feel that other group members support her or his contributions, ideas, and opinions. The opposite of creating support is to elicit defensiveness within the group. Each member should make other members feel supported. The dialogic mediator must address situations where a member is put on the defensive by another member of the group.

1. Listening to each to each other and offering support for others ideas, even if disagreeing, is central to competence of this dialogic skill. Group members want to support the participation of all group members. The quickest way to reduce or eliminate participation in a group is to put someone on the defensive.

2. Individual brainstorming teaches members to hesitate from reaching hasty conclusions during meetings. Reserving judgment until an appropriate time determined by the group defines this skill. Avoiding judgments seems to go against human nature. People reach a conclusion or judgment quickly -- before considering alternatives or all information. These hasty conclusions effect group performance because they tend to block careful and insightful consideration of information after the conclusion or judgment is reached.
3. Interpreting the words and actions is central to competent communication. This applies to group communication as well. Skill in interpreting verbal messages through language training and experience with other group members through role playing would eliminate a tendency to misinterpret them. The same is true of nonverbal communication, which is more difficult than interpreting verbal messages. Teaching group members to be careful in making absolute interpretations of others' communication facilitates communication. It changes the focus of defending ideas to explaining ideas for clarity. Communication focuses on understanding each other compared to reacting to our interpretations.

Taken collectively, these skills for dialogic mediation will facilitate group communication. Each group member can be trained

in these skills to facilitate conflict resolution in the group at appropriate times.

Discussion

This is an initial attempt to integrate specific communication skills into the teaching of mediation. The research is inconclusive regarding the role of mediation in groups. It is impractical to expect groups to have a neutral third party available to help mediate conflict. Expanding on the ideas of Bush and Folger (1994) we have developed an approach to mediation training in organizational groups. We suggested each group member be trained in mediation skills through a specific orientation to mediation communication -- dialogic communication.

Specific skills can be taught to group members in each of the six characteristics of dialogic communication: authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, presentness, spirit of mutuality, and supportive psychological climate. Intuition tells us that these skills will facilitate mediation attempts in organizational groups. It is likely to improve how conflict is handled for two reasons: 1) members are sensitized through the training to mediation efforts and will be more likely to accept those efforts, and 2) each group member will be able to use mediation skills to resolve conflicts in the group as needed. Group members involved in behaviors violating the principles of "dialogic

mediation" will quickly recognize the mediation attempts of other group members. The result will be, hopefully, that the group member will adjust her or his communication behaviors to minimize conflict.

The principles of "dialogic mediation" appear consistent with efforts to improve mediation. We have suggested the potential benefits of "dialogic mediation" in the group setting. Specific training in newly-established groups needs to be conducted and the group members' abilities to mediate conflict correlated with group satisfaction need to be completed in the future. In addition, the model of "dialogic mediation" can be tested in other typical mediation situations (i.e., labor mediations, divorce mediations, etc.).

References

Amason, A. C. (1996). Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision making: Resolving the paradox for top management teams. Academy of Management Journal, 39, 123-148.

Andrews, K. Z. (1995). Strategic decision making: It's all in the process. Harvard Business Review, 73, 10-11.

Bales, R. F. (1970). Personality and interpersonal behavior. New York: Holt.

Barge, J. K., & Hirokawa, R. Y. (1989). Toward a communication competency model of group leadership. Small Group Behavior, 20, 167-189.

Bartunek, D. A., Benton, A. A., & Keys, C. B. (1975). Third party intervention and the bargaining behavior of group representatives. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 19, 532-557.

Baurdoux, J. B. (1994). Ceasars and committees. Challenge, 37, 51-53.

Bell, M. A. (1974). The effects of substantive and affective conflict in problem-solving groups. Speech Monographs, 41, 19-23.

Bonoma, T. V., & Tedeschi, J. T. (1974). The relative efficacious of escalation and de-escalation for compliance-gaining in two party conflict. Social Behavior and Personality, 2, 212-218.

Boyer, C. E., & Pond, P. (1987). Employee participation and involvement. In R. L. Craig (Ed.). Training and Development Handbook. (pp. 771-784). New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.

Brockmann, E. (1996). Removing the paradox of conflict from group decisions. The Academy of Management Executive, 10, 61-63.

Brown, B. R. (1968). The effect of need to maintain face on interpersonal bargaining. Journal of Experimental and Social Psychology, 4, 107-122.

Buber, M. (1958). I and Thou, (2nd Ed.). Trans. R. G. Smith. New York: Scribners).

Buber, M. (1965). Between Man and Man. Trans. R. G. Smith. New York: Macmillan Paperback.

Bush, R. A., & Folger, J. P. (1994). The promise of mediation: Responding to conflict through empowerment and recognition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.

Canary, D. J., & Spitzberg, B. H. (1987). Appropriateness and effectiveness perception of conflict strategies. Human Communication Research, 14, 93-118.

Coogler, O. J. (1978). Structured mediation in divorce settlements: A handbook for marital mediators. Lexington, MA: Heath.

Deutsch, M. (1960). The effect of motivational orientation upon trust and suspicion. Human Relations, 13, 123-139.

Deutsch, M., & Krauss, R. M. (1960). The effect of threat upon interpersonal bargaining. Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 61, 181-189.

Donohue, W. A. (1978). An empirical framework for examining negotiation processes and outcomes. Communication Monographs, 45, 247-257.

Donohue, W. A. (1981a). Analyzing negotiation tactics: Development of a negotiation interact system. Human Communication Research, 7, 272-287.

Donohue, W. A. (1981b). Development of a model of rule use in negotiation interaction. Communication Monographs, 48, 106-120.

Donohue, W. A., Allen, M., & Burrell, N. (1988). Mediator communicative competence. Communication Monographs, 55, 104-119.

Donohue, W. A., Diez, M. E., & Hamilton, M. (1984). Coding naturalistic negotiation interaction. Human Communication Research, 10, 403-425.

Druckman, D., & Zechmeister, K. (1973). Conflict of interest and value descensus: Propositions in the sociology of conflict. Human Relations, 26, 449-466.

Eiseman, J. W. (1977). A third party consultation model for resolving recurring conflicts collaboratively. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 13, 303-314.

Fisher, R. J. (1972). Third party consultation: A method for the study and resolution of conflict. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 16, 67-95

Gottman, J. M. (1979). Marital interaction: Experimental investigations. New York: Academic Press.

Grebe, S. C. (1994). Building on structured mediation: An integrated model for global mediation of separation and divorce. Mediation Quarterly, 12, 15-35.

Hamner, W. C. (1974). Effects of bargaining strategy and pressure to reach agreement in a stalemated negotiation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30, 458-467.

Johannesen, R. L. (1983). Ethics in human communication. (2nd Ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Johnson, D. W. (1974). Communication and the inducement of cooperative behavior in conflict: A critical review. Speech Monographs, 41, 64-78.

Komorita, S. S., & Barnes, M. (1969). Effects of pressures to reach agreement in bargaining. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13, 245-252.

Korsgaard, M. A., Schweiger, D. M., & Sapienza, H. J. (1995). Building commitment, attachment, and trust in strategic decision-making teams: The role of procedural justice. Academy of Management Journal, 38, 60-84.

Leathers, D. G. (1969). Process disruption and measurement in small group communication. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 55, 287-300.

McCroskey, J. C., & Wright, D. W. (1971). The development of an instrument for measuring interaction behavior in small groups. Speech Monographs, 38, 335-340.

Manusov, V., Cody, M. J., Donohue, W. A., & Zappa, J.

(1994). Accounts in child custody mediation sessions. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 22, 1-15.

Marr, T. J. (1974). Conciliation and verbal responses as functions of orientation and threat in group interaction. Speech Monographs, 41, 6-18.

Marwell, G., & Schmitt, D. R. (1967). Dimensions of compliance-gaining: An empirical analysis. Sociometry, 67, 351-360.

Osgood, C. E. (1959). Suggestions for winning the real war with communism. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 3, 295-325.

Pavitt, C. (1993). Does communication matter in social influence during small group discussion? Five positions. Communication Studies, 44, 216-227.

Pitt, L. F., Tynan, A. C., & Nel, D. (1994). Discourse and deed: Perceptions of discussion quality and group performance in marketing decision making. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 9, 28-36.

Podell, J. E., & Knapp, W. M. (1969). The effect of mediation on the perceived firmness of the opponent. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 13, 511-520.

Polzner, J. T., Mannix, E. A., & Neale, M. A. (1995). Multiparty negotiation in its social context. In R. M. Kramer and D. M. Messick (Eds.), Negotiation as a social process. (pp. 123-142). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pondy, L. R. (1967). Organizational Conflict: concepts and models. Administrative Science Quarterly, 12, 297-320.

Priem, R. L., Harrison, D. A., & Muir, N. K. (1995). Structured conflict and consensus outcomes in group decision making. Journal of Management, 21, 691-710.

Pruitt, D. G. (1971). Indirect communication and the search for agreement in negotiation. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1, 204-239.

Putnam, L. L., & Jones, T. S. (1982a). The role of communication in bargaining. Human Communication Research, 8, 262-280.

Putnam, L. L., & Jones, T. S. (1982b). Reciprocity in negotiation: An analysis of bargaining interaction. Communication Monographs, 49, 171-193.

Reiches, N. A., & Harral, H. B. (1974). Argument in negotiation: A theoretical and empirical approach. Speech Monographs, 41, 36-48.

Rogers, C. (1961). On becoming a person. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Roloff, M. E., & Jordan, J. M. (1992). Achieving negotiation goals: The "fruits and foibles" of planning ahead. In L. L. Putnam and M. E. Roloff (Eds.), Communication and negotiation. (pp. 21-45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sabourin, T. C. (1995). The role of negative reciprocity in spouse abuse: A relational control analysis. Applied Communication Research, 23, 271-283.

Scheidel, T., & Crowell, L. (1966). Feedback in small group communication. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 52, 273-278.

Schultz, B. (1982). Argumentativeness: Its effect in group decision-making and its role in leadership perception. Communication Quarterly, 30, 368-375.

Schelling, T. C. (1960). The strategy of conflict. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Siegel, S., & Fouraker, L. E. (1960). Bargaining and group decision making. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1984). Interpersonal communication competence. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Tan, B. C. Y., Teo, H. H., & Wei, K. K. (1995). Promoting consensus in small group decision making groups. Information and Management, 28, 251-259.

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959) The social psychology of groups. New York: Wiley.

Tidwell, A. C. (1994). Not effective communication but effective persuasion. Mediation Quarterly, 12, 3-14.

Turner, D. B. (1990). Intraorganizational bargaining: The effects of goal congruence and trust on negotiation strategies. Communication Studies, 41, 54-75.

Wall, J. A. (1981). Mediation: An analysis, review, and proposed research. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 25, 157-181.

Walton, R. E., & McKersie, R. B. (1965) A behavioral theory of labor negotiations: An analysis of a social system. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Watkins, C. E. (1974). An analytic model of conflict. Speech Monographs, 41, 1-5.

Weingart, L. R., Bennett, R. J., & Brett, J. M. (1993). The impact of consideration of issues and motivation orientation on group negotiation process and outcome. Journal of Applied Psychology, 78, 504-517.